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AB HARENIS INCVLTIS

Artikelen voor Ab Waasdorp

OVERDRUK

Eindredactie: R.J. van Zoolingen

Van de redactie

Deze bundel is samengesteld ter gelegenheid van de pensionering van Ab Waasdorp in de archeologie. Van maart 1984 tot en met november 2019 was hij in dienst van de gemeente Den Haag. In deze periode heeft Ab tal van onderzoeken geleid en zo bijgedragen aan onze kennis van het verleden van de stad, maar ook van ver daarbuiten. Zijn studies en publicaties zijn voor menig archeoloog een bron van informatie en inspiratie geweest. Met deze verzameling van artikelen willen wij Ab bedanken en hem tonen wat zijn werk heeft betekend.

From the editors

This volume was compiled on the occasion of the retirement of Ab Waasdorp in archaeology. From March 1984 to November 2019 he was employed by the municipality of The Hague. During this period Ab lead numerous excavations and thus contributed to our knowledge of the past of the city, but also of far beyond. His studies and publications have been a source of information and inspiration for many an archaeologist. With this collection of papers we want to thank Ab and show him what his work has meant.

Colofon

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Roman troops of Germanic descent in *limes* forts?

Back to Scheveningseweg and other garrisons along the Lower Rhine in the third century AD

Stijn Heeren and Lourens van der Feijst

Introduction

One of the most well-known collections of material culture of the so-called Niederbieber horizon in the Netherlands was published by Ab Waasdorp, in his richly illustrated 'Van Romeinse soldaten en Cananefaten' (*Of Roman soldiers and Cananefatians*) in 1999. This site report of the military vicus of Scheveningseweg is a pleasure to read for both the larger public and the professional archaeologists interested in material culture.

There are two reasons to return to Scheveningseweg. One is that the ending date of Scheveningseweg, set to the middle of the 3rd century by Waasdorp (entirely in line with conventional dating of the Niederbieber phase by many archaeologists until very recently), is now in need of revision, due to new analyses of mainly numismatic patterns in the entire Northwest-Europe. The second reason is that his title for the 1999 book implies that the material culture found at Scheveningseweg could be attributed to Roman soldiers and Cananefatians. Although correct for most of the material, we may have identified a horizon of material culture in the *limes* area that could be related to Germanic people. A few of these finds are also present at Scheveningseweg, although not in large numbers. The material is widely spread enough though, to lead us to assume that this material may have belonged to garrisons consisting of Germanic soldiers, as will be argued below. Furthermore there are good clues in written sources and numismatic material to support this.

Re-dating and considerable softening of the *Limesfall* theory¹

The term 'Limesfall' signifies the destruction of *limes* forts by barbarian raiders between 259/260 and 275 AD and the subsequent abandonment of settlements in the hinterland of the *limes*. The traditional opinion is that most of the forts and cities were never inhabited again.² This theory was based on three elements: 1) destruction layers and fallen soldiers found at Niederbieber, 2) the analysis of the coin list, which contains no younger coins than 259/260 AD in the case of Niederbieber and many other sites, 3) citations from historical sources that the right bank of the Upper Rhine and Danube (Agri Decumates) was given up.³ The idea of Limesfall has shaped the basic chronology of provincial-Roman archaeology: the transition of the Middle to the Late Roman period is set at ca. 260 AD and many items of material culture in the so-called Niederbieber horizon are dated to the period 190-260 AD.⁴

Originally, the above theory of Limesfall concerned the Obergermanisch-Raetische *limes* and was dated to 259/260 AD. However, destruction by barbarian violence is assumed for the Lower Rhine *limes* as well, while in fact the evidence is much weaker here. One argument (although often not mentioned explicitly) was the same, the end of coin series of the *limes* sites. There are however several important differences. The first is the date: most of the coin series of sites along the Lower Rhine do not break off in 259/260 AD, but in 274-275 AD, with coins of the Tetrici or Aurelian. The

1 This section is an abbreviated form of Heeren 2016.

2 Hoffmann 1823; Mommsen 1894, V, p. 150-152; Ritterling 1901.

3 Ritterling 1901.

4 Oelmann 1914 (1968); Schallmayer 1987.

second difference is the absence of burnt deposits: these are assumed to have been present but in none of the cases excavated and published. The book *De limes van Moezel tot Noordzeekust*⁵ contains many references to forts assumedly destroyed and abandoned in 275 AD, but destruction layers are absent. Only ending coin lists remain. The difference between various publications with regard to identical sites is interesting, which is illustrated here with the example of the fleet base at Köln-Alteburg. No destruction layer has been reported for this site, but in the three survey works, three different ending dates were given.

In 1974: “Es hat sicher bis am Ende des 3. Jahrhunderts bestanden.”⁶

In 1987: “Die Münzreihe des Lagers reicht...bis in das 4. Jh.,...”⁷

In 1995: “Bestand tot 275.” [Existed until 275].⁸

A similar example can be given for Xanten-Vetera II, the fortress that is eroded by the Rhine and only known through dredge and diving finds. In 1974 it was described as follows:

“Funde, hauptsächlich Keramik, datieren in die Zeit zwischen Ende der 1. und zweiten Hälfte des 3. Jahrhunderts; [...]”.

And also: “...die Legio XXX Ulpia Victrix, die bis zum Frankeneinfall des Jahres 276 hier nachweisbar ist.”⁹

Notwithstanding the fact that only isolated finds have been gathered, this fort too is claimed to be destroyed in a handbook of 1987:

“Mit Vetera II wurde das eine der beiden niedergermanischen Legionslager so vollständig zerstört, das man sich später nicht nur ein neue Befestigung, sondern auch für einen neuen Standort entscheiden mußte.”¹⁰

One last citation is given here to show that the destruction of the limes forts and cities is just an assumption. It concerns Colonia Ulpia Traiana, the town near modern Xanten.

“Während die Stadt 259 noch nicht gelitten zu haben scheint, wird sie 15 Jahre später eingenommen und von Franken und deren ostgerm Verbündeten überrannt. Die Kölner Stadtmauer hält stand, während die der N Kolonie fällt. Leider sind bislang keine Brandschichten dieser Zeit entdeckt worden. Sie lagen zu weit oben, als daß sie heute noch im Ackerland erhalten wären.”¹¹

In short, the theory of Limesfall that was well developed for the Obergermanisch-Raetische limes, was extrapolated to the Lower Rhine limes, but with much poorer evidence. Only the ending coin lists, terminating in either 270 or 274-275 AD, at almost every site in the Lower Rhine area, are pointing in this direction. The main problem is that these claims are presented as results from archaeological investigation, while in reality they prove to be interpretations based on a strict and uncritical application of information from the written sources.¹²

What thus remains of the Limesfall theory, is entirely dependent on terminating coin lists: a general lack of coinage at sites in the northwest provinces of Rome. At first glance this seems to point to massive abandonment of sites. However, there is another explanation possible, and this has been investigated more closely by several authors.¹³ Apart from discontinuity of the habitation, it is also a possibility that coin use itself ceased. In the last decades of the 3rd century, large amounts of copies of official coins starts to circulate. This is a strong indication that the Roman central government stopped supplying the north with official coinage. This is no wonder, since the soldier emperors that reigned the empire from the 230s to the 280s were campaigning all the time against foreign invaders or Roman usurpers, and some reigned for only a few years or just months. They hardly found the time to be in Rome. The result is that later 3rd-century official coinage is very hard to find in all northern Roman provinces, and that lots of copies, often called ‘barbarous radiates’, circulated in order to keep economic life going. This only terminates with the reign of Constanti-

5 Bechert and Willems 1995.

6 La Baume 1974, p. 166.

7 Horn 1987, p. 519.

8 Bechert 1995, p. 34.

9 Gechter 1974, p. 107-108.

10 Kunow 1987, p. 86-87.

11 Horn 1987, p. 636.

12 See also Van Ossel 2011 and Heising 2015 for similar examples in other areas.

13 Stribny 1989; Kropff and Van der Vin 2003; Heeren 2016.

ne I, who managed to restore coin supply in the early 4th century.¹⁴ Now it is apparent that coin supply is the problem and that official coins from the 240s to 280s (or even until 305 AD) were hardly produced and are really scarce in the entire northwest, the ending of coin lists seems no good ground to suppose discontinuity of habitation, certainly not when destruction layers are absent. At sites where the youngest coins are minted by the Severan emperors, continued circulation into the later 3rd century is still a possibility – that has to be ascertained on the basis of other finds, with often less ideal dating resolution. If copies of official coins are present, activity until the early 4th century is possible. In any case can the absence of coins alone not be used as an argument for discontinuity of habitation.

Additional evidence for *limes* chronology: military brooch types and their dating

It is interesting to study the material culture of *limes* sites a little further in order to grasp the scale of (dis)continuities. As we have seen above, coins are unsuitable for this, given the major disruption of supply of coinage in the 3rd century. Brooches on the other hand were used widely in this period, and have a reasonable (though not ideal) dating resolution.

Firstly, brooches of the so-called Niederbieber horizon are treated here: pins with a strong military connotation that are often found in military camps. These include the openwork plate brooches with trumpet motifs,¹⁵ knee brooches with spring-cover¹⁶, forked and single bow brooches with half spring-cover¹⁷, forked and single bow brooch with triangular or peltate head-plate¹⁸, and the proto-crossbow brooches ‘with long hinge arms’¹⁹. Examples are shown in fig. 1. They all date to the later 2nd and primarily the 3rd century. The group with long hinge arms is generally dated to the entire 3rd century, but Gechter argued that it was introduced not before the second quarter of that century.²⁰ We have searched for coin-dated contexts with this brooch and confirm Gechter’s thesis on main lines: the type is often deposited with coins minted between 240 and 280 AD. Of course it could have been introduced earlier and there are not many later coins to assess its ending date, so the date range must be set at 225-300 AD with preference for the period 240-280 AD.²¹

Finally one other type is treated here and its relevance lies in its scarcity: the developed crossbow brooch, characterized by two full knobs at the side arms and a third knob at the brooch head.²² Examples are shown in fig. 2. It is the successor of the above-mentioned bow brooch with long hinge arms and is primarily worn by the military: common soldiers or lower officers in the early and middle 4th century and adopted by higher officers and senators in the 5th century.²³

The brooch types are arranged in the left part of table 1 in chronological groups. The considerable number of brooches in the first two columns indicate ample activity at many sites in the Lower Rhine area in the 3rd century, followed by an almost complete cease of activities in the 4th century.

Given the scarcity of the crossbow brooches, it is highly unlikely that there is any military presence of significance present in the Western-Netherlands in the 4th century. This is also indicated by the lack of coins of the 4th century. The scarcity of coinage as explained above for the 3rd century, is not valid for the 4th century: the Constantinian and Valentinian emperors issued large numbers of coins, present in cities and military stations in high numbers.²⁴ Therefore, lack of these coins is best explained by discontinuity of habitation.

14 Stribny 1989; Kropff and Van der Vin 2003; Heeren 2016.

15 Riha 1979, types 3.18 to 3.20; Böhme 1972, types 46-49; Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, type 59.

16 Riha 1979, type 4.11; Böhme 1972, type 21; Heeren and van der Feijst 2017, type 63.

17 Riha 1979, type 4.10; Böhme 1972, type 25-26; Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, type 64.

18 Riha 1979, type 3.13; Böhme 1972, type 22 and 27; Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, type 65.

19 Riha 1979, type 6.4; Böhme 1972, type 28-29; Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, type 67.

20 Gechter 1980.

21 Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, p. 176-177.

22 Keller 1971; Swift 2000; Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, p. 178-182 (type 68).

23 Van Thienen 2017.

24 Kropff and Van der Vin 2003.

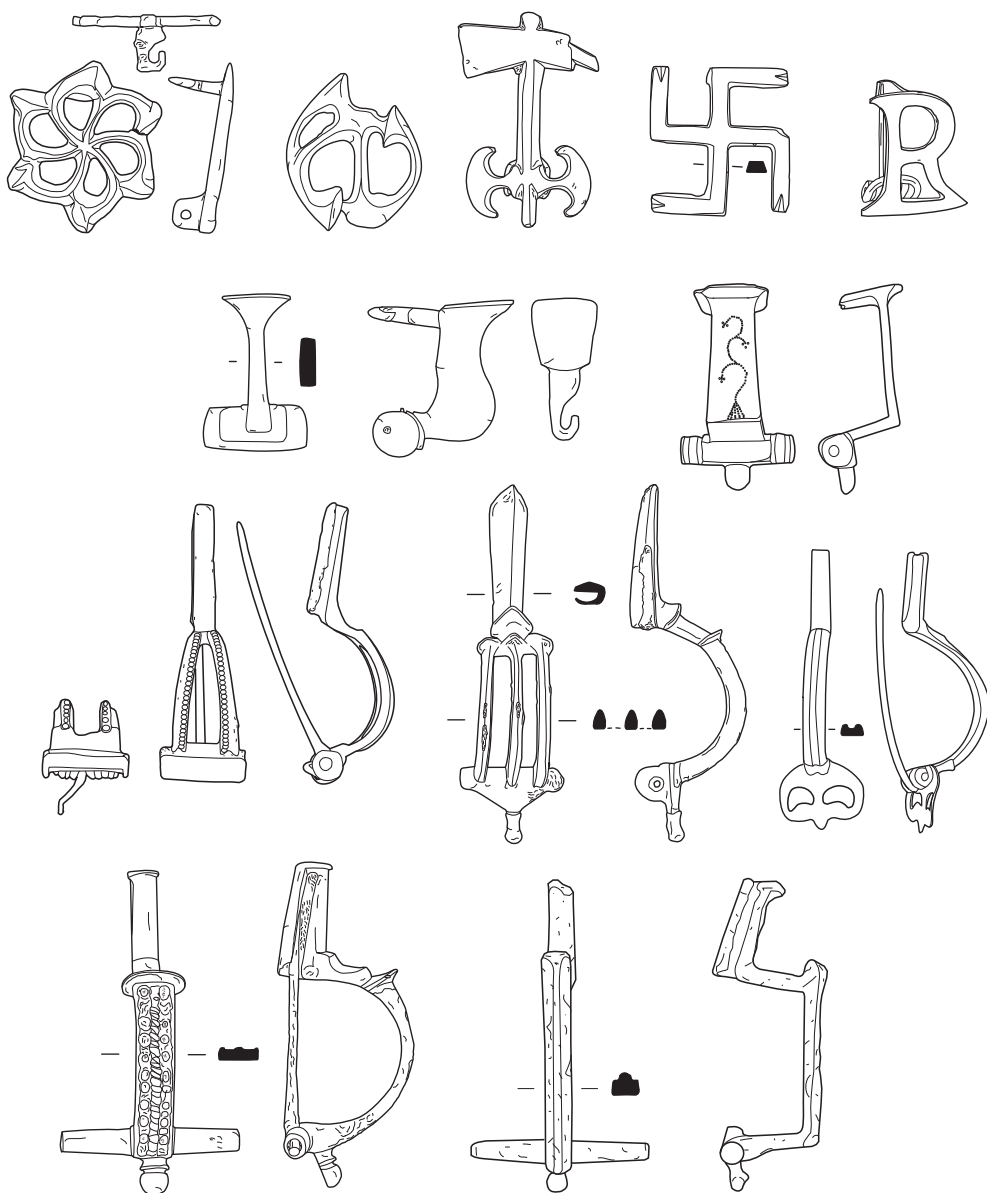


Fig. 1 Examples of Niederbieber-horizon brooches, dating to the late 2nd and 3rd century. (After: Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, figs. 4.117, 4.125, 4.127, 4.129, 4.133).

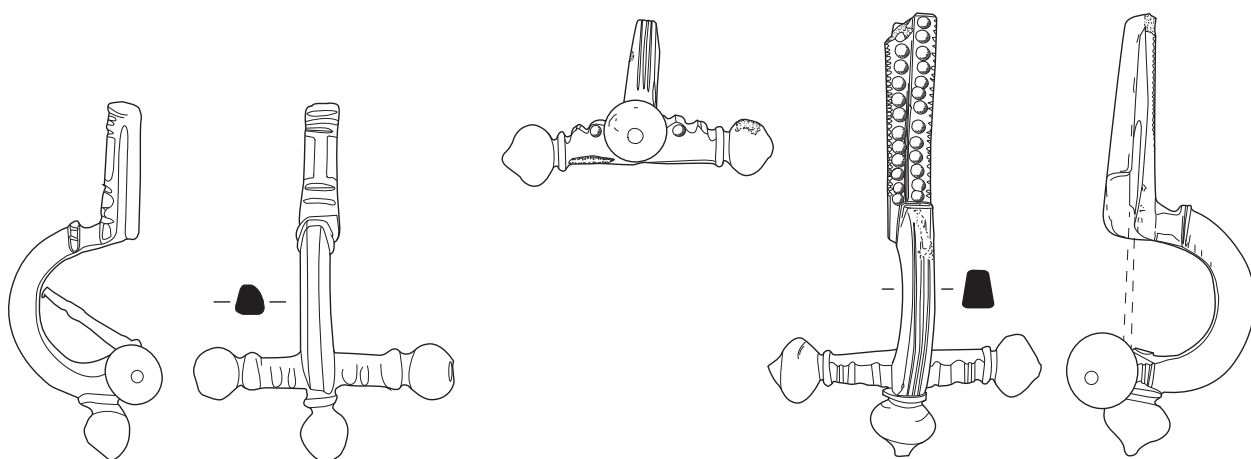


Fig. 2 Examples of developed crossbow brooches dating to the 4th century. (After: Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, fig. 4.135).

Table 1 Brooch types arranged in chronological groups.

types	Niederbieber horizon (type 29, 63, 64, 65)	Niederbieber horizon (type 67, 68a)	developed crossbow (type 68b-d)	Germanic brooch Almgren 195-198 (type 61b)	Germanic brooch Almgren 199 (type 71)
date AD	175-275	225-300	300-400	175-260	260/280-375
Wateringen-Juliahof	1	1	0	1	1
Leiden-Roomburg	3	1	0	2	0
Katwijk-Zanderij	3	0	0	0	0
Poeldijk-vpl. B	2	1	0	0	0
Naaldwijk-Zand Heultje	1	0	0	0	1
Naaldwijk-Holland College	0	5	0	0	5
Voorburg-Forum Hadriani	10	4	0	0	4
Leidschendam-Leeuwenberg	0	0	0	1	0
Den Haag-Wateringseveld	2	0	0	0	1
Den Haag-Uithofslaan	0	2	0	0	0
Den Haag-Scheveningseweg	12	3	0	0	0
Den Haag-Ockenburgh	3	2	0	0	0
Alphen-aan den Rijn	0	4	0	0	0
Woerden-Hochowoert	2	2	0	0	0
Vechten	9	4	0	1	0
De Meern (vicus, castellum)	2	3	2?	0	0
Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer/Trekweg	0	4	3	0	4

Germanic brooches

Furthermore, two types of small bow brooches have also relevance for the last phase of the *limes*, since they inform us to some extent about contacts between the military and areas outside the province. The brooch Almgren 195-198 is described as knee brooch with 'high' catch-plate and blunt foot.²⁵ Examples from the current study area, the central and western river area of the Netherlands, are shown in fig. 3. Since these brooches were known to occur in Northern-Germany and even Scandinavia, the style of this brooch has always been interpreted as Germanic by archaeologists. Of course style is not necessarily indicative of geographical provenance, since style can be copied and adapted by others. However, its northern origin was recently confirmed by the discovery of a casting mould for a brooch of this type near Loppersum.²⁶ Schulte dates this type to the later 2nd century and the first half of the 3rd century.²⁷ Also relevant is the footless Armbrust brooch that has a catch-plate hammered directly out of the bow end Almgren 199.²⁸ Examples from the study area are shown in figure 3.

An early 3rd century date was proposed for these brooches by A. Böhme, based on relative chronologies of the Free Germanic area.²⁹ However, this date is now rejected as too early, because dendrochronologically dated contexts of Fallward near Bremen in the Elbe-Weser area, prove a date around 300 AD and one later in the 4th century.³⁰ These late dates have also been attested in the Roman province: graves with these brooches in the cemeteries of Nijmegen and

25 Almgren 1897, p. 93-94 (Gruppe VII Serie 2 fig. 195-198); Böhme 1972, type 37a-d; Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, type 61b.

26 Noordelijk Archeologisch Depot (Nuis), 2008-II.9, Lutjewijtwerd; with thanks to Ernst Taayke.

27 Schulte 2011, p. 90-93.

28 Almgren 1897, p. 94-95 (Gruppe VII Serie 3, fig. 199); Böhme 1972, type 37e; Riha 1979, type 3.8; Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, type 71.

29 Böhme 1972, p. 34-35.

30 Schulte 2011, p. 162-170.

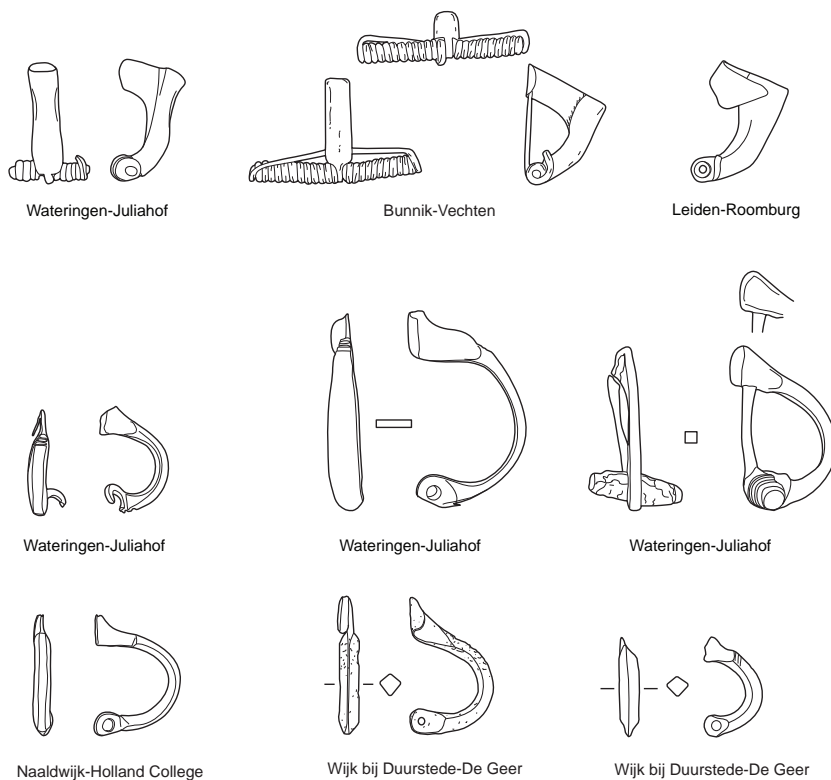


Fig. 3 Examples of brooches Almgren 195-198 (top row) and Almgren 199 (middle and below). (After: Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, Plates 60 and 68).

Cologne also contained 4th-century coins.³¹ However, its introduction must be dated somewhat earlier. At sites that have no 4th-century phase, like Forum Hadriani and around Naaldwijk, this clasp is the youngest find. Forum Hadriani has five specimens. The youngest pottery in this city is dated to the last decades of the 3rd century.³²

Erdrich studied the same brooches Almgren Gruppe VII and is quite quick in associating the Germanic brooch types with Germanic people.³³ He even claims that the relative high number of Germanic brooches proves the *structural* presence of barbarians in the forts, vici and settlements of the Western-Netherlands and Eastern river area.³⁴ Given the fact that he employs the same date as we do for the brooches (late 2nd to 4th century) – quite a long period! – his claim of a structural presence needs further investigation, and importantly, it needs chronological focus. Erdrich refers to the written sources of the later 3rd and first half of the 4th century, which provide scattered hints of Roman countermeasures after a phase of Frankish occupation of the border zone. These events of the 280s or 290s can account for the type 71 brooches (Almgren 199), but not for the older type Almgren 195-198, which was dated from the late 2nd to the mid 3rd century.

Given the start of this article – considerable weakening of the Limesfall theory in the light of the absence of burnt layers and different explanations for the absence of 3rd century coins – there are more problems with Erdrich's scenario of Frankish attacks or immigration being responsible for the long period of Germanic influence in the Dutch Western area and Eastern river area. Erdrich may be right in seeing lots of 4th-century activity outside the area, however, this is different for the Lower Rhine *limes* west of Nijmegen, where 4th-century coins and the crossbow brooches characteristic for 4th-century garrisons, are lacking near completely.

In the following section, other and slightly earlier indications from the written sources will be highlighted and confronted with the archeological evidence in order to explain the Germanic material in the last phase of Middle Roman settlements and military sites.

³¹ Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, p. 187-188, with references.

³² Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, p. 187-188.

³³ Erdrich 2003, p. 6-8.

³⁴ Erdrich 2003, p. 9.

The written sources, gold *aurei* and early Germanic settlement

The first phase of Germanic immigration in the frontier zone on a larger than incidental scale is most likely during the Gallic Empire. In the midst of the so-called military anarchy of the 230s to 280s, characterized by wars against foreign invaders on the frontiers and internal strife, Postumus (259-269) founded the Gallic Empire. The Gallic and Germanic provinces, Britannia and probably Hispania did not answer to the central rule in Rome any more but supported Postumus and his successors Victorinus (269-271) and Tetricus (271-274).³⁵ The reasons for Postumus to start the secession are not entirely clear, but it seems that the inability of the central government to prevent damage to the Germanic provinces by invading barbarians played a role.³⁶ Another reason to believe that particularly Germania Inferior was dear to Postumus is that he minted coins with references to Hercules, the god worshipped in the northwest – he might have been a Batavian.³⁷ The high numbers of Gallic coins (and copies thereof) found at military sites is an indication that many forts along the Rhine were guarded in this period³⁸, while forts along the Danube were mostly abandoned. Furthermore, the establishment of a first series of new *burgi* to guard the road from Bavay to Cologne happened in this period.³⁹ All in all, the episode of the Gallic empire can be seen as a period of stabilization, in which Germania Inferior was seriously threatened but also defended with reasonable success. While Germania Inferior was firmly in the hands of Postumus, Germania Superior was heavily disputed. The famous Victory altar of Augsburg commemorating the victory over barbarian invaders was erected for Postumus originally, however his name was to be chiseled away later, presumably when Gallienus took over the area.⁴⁰

It is in the context of the above civil wars that Germanic forces were levied as troops for the Gallic empire versus the Roman troops of Gallienus. The *Historia Augusta*, a compendium of biographies of emperors from the 2nd to the 4th century, mentions that Postumus and his comrade-in-arms and successor Victorinus, hired Celtic and Frankish auxiliary troops in high numbers: *et cum multis auxiliis Postumus iuvaretur Celticis atque Francicis in bellum cum Victorino processit*.⁴¹

There is additional numismatic evidence, in the form of the distribution of *aurei* minted by Postumus, Victorinus and Tetricus, to support this. Gold, and to a lesser extent silver, are used for military and diplomatic payments. It is significant that many gold *aurei* minted by the Gallic emperors are found north of the Rhine, in the north of Germany and Poland. Several others are found in the Dutch *limes* area.⁴² The gold can be considered as payment for military service by Germanic mercenaries, who handed the gold to relatives, or returned to their homeland after completing their term of service.

Germanic garrisons along the Lower Rhine

The historic reference to Postumus and Victorinus employing 'Frankish soldiers in high numbers' as auxiliary troops in their struggle against the rival emperor Gallienus matches well with the *aurei* found in the Germanic area. The occurrence of brooches Almgren 195-198 at many settlements and military sites in the Dutch river area (fig. 4)⁴³ can be seen as evidence for the stationing of Germanic people in the area.⁴⁴

The brooches are dated between the late 2nd century to the mid 3rd century and it is possible that they were still in full circulation in the 250s and 260s. If so, these brooches could well represent the presence of Germanic auxiliaries or

³⁵ Drinkwater 1987.

³⁶ De Boone 1954, p. 35-37.

³⁷ Willems 1984, p. 249.

³⁸ Kropff and Van der Vin 2003.

³⁹ Brulet 1995.

⁴⁰ Schallmayer 1996.

⁴¹ *Historia Augusta*, tyranni triginta VI 2 (ed. Callu 1992).

⁴² Degler 2017; Schulte 1983.

⁴³ PAN: Portable Antiquities of the Netherlands: www.portable-antiquities.nl.

⁴⁴ See also the article by Jasper de Bruin in this volume.

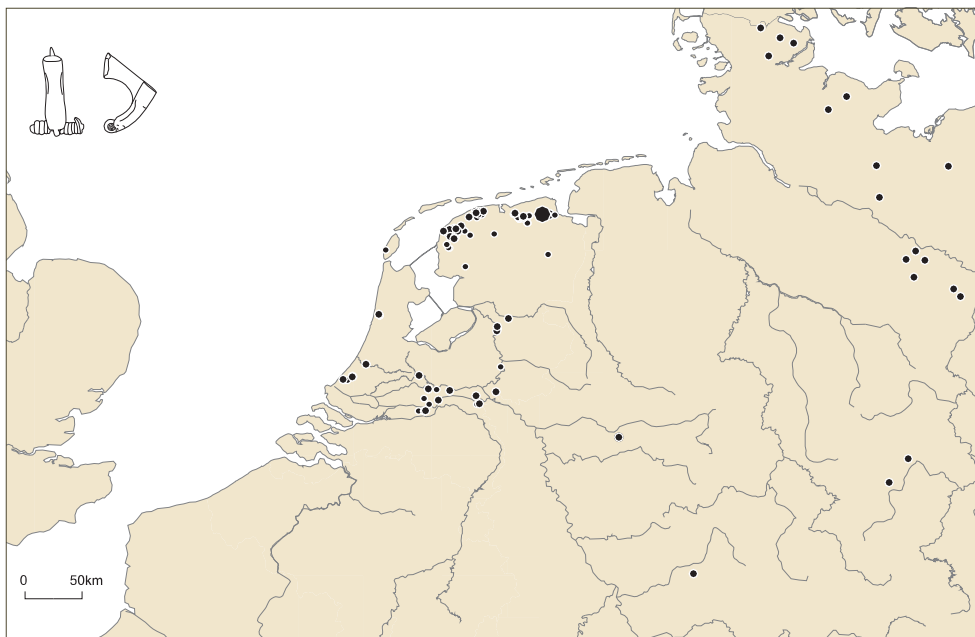


Fig. 4 The spatial distribution of Almgren 195-198 brooches. (After: Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, 385, fig. 8.19, with additions from the recent PAN programme. German data conform Schulte 2011, Liste 22, Karte 35).

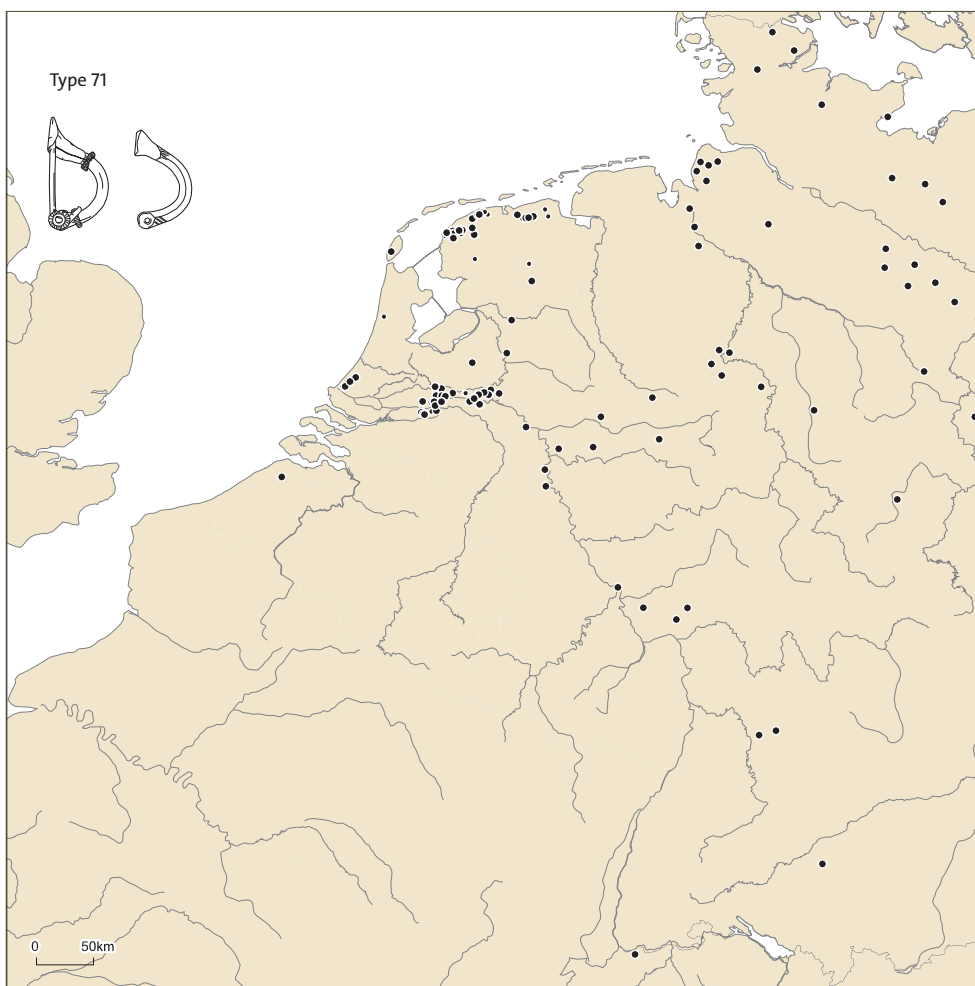


Fig. 5 The spatial distribution of Almgren 199 brooches. (After: Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, 398, fig. 8.29, with additions from the recent PAN programme. German data conform Schulte 2011, Liste 47, Karte 61).

their families. While on the one hand the numbers are considerable, they are not very large. Much more numerous are the Almgren 199 brooches. They are of course not restricted to the region under study here: both types mentioned are even more numerous in the Eastern river area within the province, and of course in the Frisian-Groningen area and the Elbe-Weser area, their probable areas of origin (fig. 5).⁴⁵ The Almgren 199 brooches found in the Roman province are most likely connected to a slightly later phase of immigration. The Panegyrics hail Constantius Chlorus around 293 or 297 AD for defeating a Frankish group that had settled before in Batavia, where they had been commanded by a former native of the place, probably of Roman provincial origin: *terram Bataviam, sub ipse quondam alumno suo a diversis Francorum gentibus occupatam omni hoste purgavit*.⁴⁶

Although some translators postulate this native leader (*alumnus*) to be Carausius the Menapian,⁴⁷ De Boone and also Willems strongly argue to identify him as Postumus.⁴⁸ If we accept that the Germanic people brought in by Postumus around 260 AD was removed in the mid 290s, they lived in the river area for over 30 years. The replacement of Almgren 195-198 brooches by the later type Almgren 199 will have occurred in this period. It is even possible that the older group was not even produced any more but brought in the 260s as reminders of their Germanic background, as a sort of heirlooms, while the latter group was made in high numbers while these people lived in the Dutch river area.

After the removal of the Frankish people by Constantius Chlorus, the countryside seems to be almost completely depopulated, for almost a century.⁴⁹

Conclusions

Given the re-evaluation of the Limesfall and new light on numismatics presented above, the few coins dating to the middle and second half of the 3rd century found by Waasdorp are better understood as evidence for continuity than for discontinuity. It is possible that Scheveningseweg was garrisoned continuously until the period of the Gallic emperors, and so are many other sites mentioned in table 1. However, there are no sites in the Western river area that produced evidence for 'official military' activities in the 4th century. Wijk bij Duurstede-De Geer/Trekweg and De Meern in the Central river area and Nijmegen in the Eastern part are the only sites with 4th-century coins in some numbers and developed crossbow brooches.

When we follow the interpretations above regarding the dating, provenance and historical framework for the sudden appearance of large numbers of Germanic brooches, the brooches type Almgren 195-198 are an indication for the stationing of Germanic soldiers in the period of the Gallic Empire (259-274 AD) and the later type Almgren 199 may be attributed to their continued presence in the following period (275-293/297 AD). Whether the Germanic presence of this later phase was purely military or also of civilian nature at other sites than only the military centres, remains to be researched. It is however very likely that troops of Germanic descent were present at many sites in the Western river area.

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⁴⁵ Heeren and Van der Feijst 2017, p. 166-167, p. 187-188.

⁴⁶ Pan. Lat. VI (ed. Nixon/Rodgers 1994), Constantino Augusto 5.3: Cf. De Boone 1954, p. 57-58.

⁴⁷ Nixon and Rodgers 1994, p. 224, following La Baume.

⁴⁸ De Boone 1954, p. 36, p. 42, p. 58; Willems 1984, p. 249. Identified as Menapian, Carausius cannot easily be named an *alumnus* of the Franks.

⁴⁹ Heeren 2015; Heeren 2017.

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